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[Celebrating National Physician Assistant Week](#)

Filed under [Medical Service Corps](#) {[one comment](#)}

by Cmdr. Ed Owens, physician assistant specialty leader, Naval Health Clinic Cherry Point



Cmdr. Ed Owens, physician assistant
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National Physician Assistants (PA) Day was first celebrated Oct. 6, 1987, in honor of the 20th anniversary of the first graduating class of physician assistants.

On Oct. 6, 2010, President Barrack Obama proclaimed October 6 – 12, as National Physician Assistant Week. This year the physician assistant profession will celebrate its 50th year! I want to recognize the active duty, reserve, civil service and contractor PAs serving the United States Navy and our patients. Serving our country with honor, courage and commitment characterizes the unique dedication Navy PAs offer our shipmates at home and abroad, often in harm's way.

Reflecting on the 50 years since our profession's inauguration, it is amazing to see how much the PA profession has grown. The vision of Duke University Medical Center's Dr. Eugene Stead, Jr., whose progressive idea to solve a growing shortage of primary care providers, provided the impetus launching the profession. The first graduating PA class consisted of three former U.S. Navy hospital corpsmen, Vic Germino, Ken Ferrell and Rich Scheele, graduating from Duke University on Oct. 6, 1967. From those first three, there are now more than 100,000 men and women practicing as physician assistants. The PA profession has since grown to more than 225 accredited PA programs nationwide, graduating approximately 5,000 PAs annually.



Navy PA Program, 1975


The first Navy physician assistant class graduated in August 1974, and graduates were subsequently commissioned as warrant officers. In 1992, our profession transitioned to a regular commission, joining the Medical Service Corps ranks of 31 subspecialties. Today, more than 350 active duty and reserve PAs muster in our ranks.

Navy physician assistants are making an indelible mark on Navy Medicine. Members of our community serve in a variety of environments around the world on land, at sea and with the U.S. Marine Corps. Specialty training opportunities include general and orthopedic surgery, aviation and emergency medicine. Navy PAs are serving in leadership roles to include officers in charge, directorships and various other billets.

Although our history spans only half a century, we are a storied profession. I want to say thank you to all of the men and women in uniform serving as PAs in our Navy. This appreciation extends to the hundreds of civil service and civilian contractor PAs serving the Department of Defense and its patients. Thank you for your compassion, sacrifice and dedication to the profession. Happy 50th birthday, shipmates!

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1.  *CDR Patty Miller USN RET* says:
[October 7, 2016 at 10:25 am](#)

Congratulations Shipmates!

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